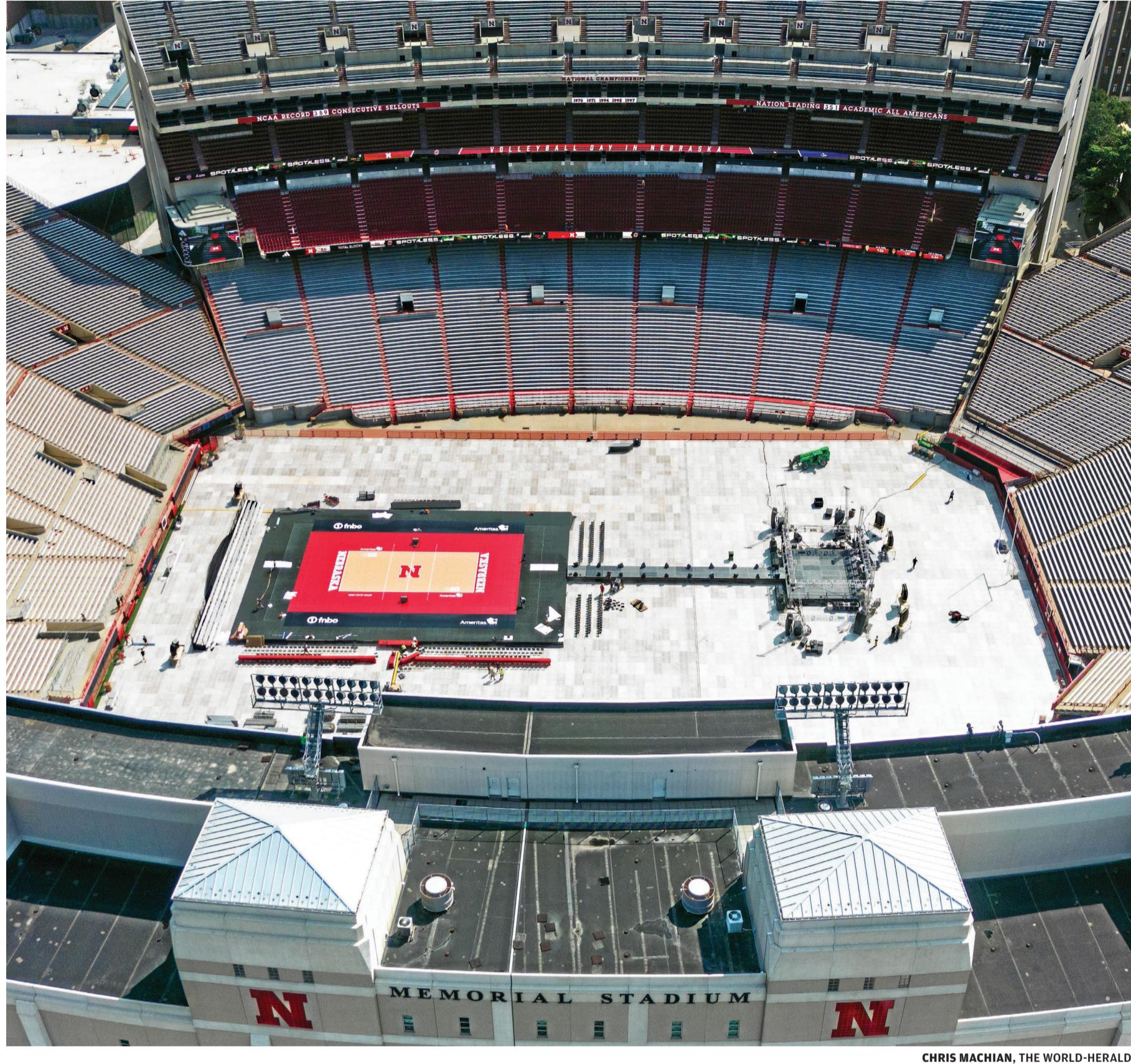


Omaha World-Herald SPORTS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 30, 2023
SECTION C



CHRIS MACHIAN, THE WORLD-HERALD

HISTORIC DAY FOR SPORT, STATE

'Huge risk' is expected to be very rewarding for record-setting crowd

BRENT C. WAGNER
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN — "It's very special actually being able to be someone who is going to play in that match that will probably hold the (attendance) record until we get to tell our daughters that we hold that record."

It was two months away, but that quote from Nebraska volleyball player Merritt Beason on June 15 put in perspective

the magnitude of what was coming with the Huskers' match in Memorial Stadium.

Years from now, Beason may be able to tell her children that she played in a volleyball match that 90,000 people wanted to attend.

Six months after it was announced, Volleyball Day in Nebraska is here. On Wednesday, Nebraska plays UNO at 7 p.m.

Please see NU VOLLEYBALL, Page C5

UNO AT NO. 4 NEBRASKA

7 p.m. Wednesday

Memorial Stadium

BTN, 590, 107.3

A volleyball court has been constructed over the Memorial Stadium field that will host Wednesday's much-anticipated Volleyball Day in Nebraska.

Division II powerhouses 'grateful' to be part of volleyball celebration

GENE SCHINZEL
World-Herald Staff Writer

Among the thousands of faces who will be watching Rachel Walker on the court Wednesday at Memorial Stadium, there's one face across the net that the Wayne State setter will be happy to see.

Jaden Ferguson, who has been best friends with Walker since they played together in high school at Lincoln Southwest, will make her UNK debut

during the first match of Volleyball Day in Nebraska.

"We're pretty competitive, so I think we try to keep our volleyball life and our friend life a little bit apart," said Walker, who enters her fourth season as Wayne State's starting setter. "But what a great opportunity for us to compete in our last year at this level."

Ferguson is a grad transfer

Please see DIVISION II, Page C6

NFL

Mathis, Palmer are among ex-Huskers to make rosters

WILSON MOORE
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN — Tuesday was the final day of cuts as NFL teams trimmed their rosters down to 53 players. A handful of former Huskers were on the bubble as rosters were finalized, with some making the cut and others departing from rosters over the past few days.

Quarterback Adrian Martinez was cut by Detroit after signing as an undrafted

free agent in the spring. The Lions signed veteran Teddy Bridgewater to back up Jared Goff, leaving Martinez in a competition with Nate Sudfeld as the possible third quarterback. Ultimately, neither got the job. Sudfeld tore his ACL and will likely miss the season. Martinez was waived, and Detroit will begin the season with two quarterbacks.

Please see NFL, Page C4



HUSKER TIGHT END GILBERT ARRESTED

The sophomore allegedly broke into a vape and liquor shop early Tuesday.

Page C4

NEBRASKA AT MINNESOTA

NU starts fresh at kicker with freshman winning job

EVAN BLAND
World-Herald Staff Writer

LINCOLN — For the first time in a decade, an in-state scholarship kicker will start for Nebraska.

True freshman Tristan Alvano has earned the No. 1 job, NU coach Matt Rhule said Tuesday. The decision ends a camp-long battle with 23-year-old veteran Timmy Bleekrode and puts the Omaha Westside graduate under the spotlight for

7 p.m. Thursday

Minneapolis

Fox, 590 AM

the season opener Thursday night at Minnesota.

"I'll tell you this: If the kick comes down to the end and we've got to go win it, I'm going to put Tristan out there and believe he's going to make it," Rhule said.

Please see NU FOOTBALL, Page C4

IDIOT-PROOF LAWN RENOVATION

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JUMBO & 1 CU FT

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\$8.95
SPOTS
40 LB.
4-8-000 SQ FT
UNCLE'S PRICE 10 @ \$7.95 ea

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KILLS FLEAS, TICKS,
CHIGGERS and more
\$14.95
40 LB.
4-8-000 SQ FT
UNCLE'S PRICE 10 @ \$8.00

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AND
DURABLE
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SPRINKLERS
NOZZLES
SPRAYERS
REPAIR PARTS
WE GOT 'EM!

JUMBO MUMS
WE GOT 'EM!
GREAT SELECTION

SOD SALE
FRESH CUT
HEAT WAVE
BLADE WAVE
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BIG
BAGS!
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RESTORES NUTRIENTS
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• DARKEST GREEN
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Bulldog Tough
Sun & Shade
50 lbs. @ \$3.29 lb.

STADIUM SPECIAL
GERMINATES
RED ZONE
TOUGH
50 lb. @ \$3.49 lb.

HEATWAVE
• DEEP ROOTS
• DROUGHT TOLERANT
• DISEASE RESISTANCE
50 lbs. @ \$3.29 lb.

Estate Mix
PRETTIEST
LAWNS
OMAHA
50 lbs. @ \$3.49 lb.

PREMIUM SHADE GRASS
GROWS \$3.95
LBS.
50 lbs. @ \$3.59 lb.

GREEN LOVE
GOOD-BYE
YELLOW
GROWING
TREES
SLOW RELEASE
WITH IRON
50 lbs. @ \$3.59 lb.

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MAX MIX
LANDSCAPE \$8.95
Soil Mix
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Stronger Roots
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GET TO THE GRASS PAD YOUR DEAD GRUB HEADQUARTERS

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THISTLE
WILD BIRD
LINDSEY
SAFFLOWER
CHEAP! CHEAP!

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PINE
CEDAR
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COLORS
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NEBRASKA VOLLEYBALL

AMIE JUST
Lincoln Journal Star

LINCOLN — Glance up from the scarlet floor.

There's the synchronized strobing cellphone lights, reflecting off the red, steel beams that arch over the court. As the introduction music blares, goosebumps form on the skin.

Through the darkness, all eyes — all 8,500-plus pairs — are intently, yet lovingly, staring back. It doesn't matter the opponent or the time of first serve. The Nebraska volleyball fans who pack the Devaney Center are die-hards.

This is the epicenter of college volleyball. Try as other universities might, there is no equal. It's not even close.

The Lincoln Journal Star and Lee Enterprises filed public records requests with all 53 public institutions in the Power Six conferences — the ACC, Big East, Big Ten, Big 12, SEC and Pac-12 — in an effort to determine how many women's programs turned a profit in the 2022 fiscal year.

The Journal Star reviewed more than 4,000 pages of NCAA financial records from the most recent fiscal year — July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022 — and found that out of the 522 NCAA-sponsored women's athletics programs at the 53 public Power Six schools, only one program turned a profit.

Nebraska volleyball.

One out of 522. That's 0.19%.

"To me, it's somewhat disappointing, given where I think we've come via Title IX or where we should expect to be via Title IX," said Doug Ewald, Nebraska's executive associate athletic director and chief financial officer. "It's a little mind-boggling to think about that, boy, we have the only women's sport in the country that makes money."

"It's a tribute to our fan base."

Data analysis methods

The NCAA's revenue-and-expense document contains 81 pages of financial information, including 19 specific revenue categories and 42 specific expense categories with line items for each NCAA-sponsored team.

The Journal Star compiled each team's total operating revenue figure and their corresponding total operating expense figure and did the math to determine profit/loss.

Through that analysis, Nebraska was the only team in the black. The closest major women's sport to breaking even was Illinois women's basketball, which reported a loss of \$43,156. Compare that to Mississippi women's basketball, which netted a loss of \$7.7 million for the 2021-22 season.

Among volleyball programs, only six teams lost less than \$1 million in 2022 — NC State, Virginia, North Carolina, UConn and Clemson. Every other team lost more than \$1 million with 10 teams losing more than \$2 million that season.

Additionally, the Journal Star noted ticket sales numbers for further potential program comparison, considering Nebraska volleyball brought in \$2.1 million in ticket sales for the 2021 season.

There are a few asterisks.

Nebraska volleyball, for example, charges seat premiums for tickets. That figure, which was around \$1 million for the 2022 fiscal year, does not factor into the NCAA data. Nebraska's seat premiums range from \$50 annually per seat for the C section to \$2,250 annually per seat for the premier courtside sections and VIP.

According to the NCAA, Nebraska volleyball turned a profit of \$233,454 in the 2022 fiscal year. So, in the eyes of the Ne-



EILEEN T. MESLAR, THE WORLD-HERALD

braska athletic department, Husker volleyball generates even more profit than what's shown on the NCAA reports.

Additionally, private schools do not have to adhere to public records law, even though they still have to submit the same revenue-and-expense form to the NCAA each year. So if Stanford volleyball, for example, generates a profit, its team-specific data is inaccessible.

Some financial figures for private schools are made public, as every university must file reports with the U.S. Department of Education to comply with the Equity in Athletics Data Act (EADA). However, those reports don't include the same specificity that the NCAA requires.

Stanford's EADA report from fiscal year 2022, for example, lists specific game-day operating expenses by team, but does not break down total expenses for each squad, nor does it detail specific revenue streams.

All of the women's teams, outside of women's basketball, are lumped into single figures for both revenues and expenses.

Stanford women's basketball reported \$8,049,798 in expenses and \$8,049,798 in revenue, per the EADA analysis, which makes them an outlier. None of the 522 teams at public Power Six institutions zeroed out, and not even South Carolina or UConn women's basketball came close to rivaling Stanford's reported revenue number. South Carolina reported \$4.1 million in revenue that year, while UConn reported \$3.5 million.

While Stanford's reported \$8 million in revenue is likely accurate, having context to know how the Cardinal came up with that number is important for clarity.

The private Power Six schools not included in this data analysis: Boston College, Duke, Syracuse, Miami, Notre Dame, Pittsburgh, Wake Forest, Butler, Creighton, DePaul, Georgetown, Marquette, Providence, St. John's, Seton Hall, Villanova, Xavier, Northwestern, Baylor, TCU, Vanderbilt, Southern California and Stanford.

The Big 12 has added four new schools for 2023 — BYU, UCF, Cincinnati and Houston. Despite UCF, Cincinnati and Houston's public school status, they were not included in this analysis since they were in mid-major conferences during the 2022 fiscal year. Their data will not be comparable to their other Power Six cohorts until the 2024 fiscal year.

How NU turns a profit

The answer is simple.

The move to the Devaney Center in 2013 paid dividends for the financial success of Nebraska's volleyball program.

Before NU left the Coliseum, the Huskers were relatively close to breaking even — reporting losses of \$335,000, \$197,000 and \$156,000 in the final three seasons in their former venue.

Nebraska volleyball coach John Cook said once they figured out how Devaney would be configured, he sat down and crunched some numbers.

"If you do the math on court-side seats, skyboxes, ticket sales and if we had enough home matches, I knew we would turn a profit," Cook told the Journal Star.

Cook's math was correct.

Ticket sales skyrocketed for the 2013 season since Devaney's capacity sits at around 8,000 compared to the 4,030 that filled the Coliseum. For the 2014 fiscal year, Nebraska reported \$1.6 million in ticket sales. The year before brought in \$957,000.

The number Nebraska brings in for ticket sales has trended upward ever since, reaching an all-time high of \$2.2 million for the 2018 season. The 2021 season saw a bounce back after COVID-19, bringing in \$2.1 million.

Despite the face value price — from \$12 for the standing room only section to \$22 for seats in the lower bowl — it's a tough ticket to get.

Comparatively, only one team generated more ticket revenue than Nebraska volleyball in the 2022 fiscal year: UConn.

The Huskies made \$2.4 million in ticket sales for the 2021-22 season. Only two other women's programs made more than \$1 million in ticket sales that year: Louisville basketball and Tennessee basketball. The No. 5 ranked team in ticket sales in 2021-22 was Oklahoma softball, which reached \$985,000 that season.

While ticket sales make up the majority of Nebraska's revenue, the Huskers generate income from other streams, too.

Here's the breakdown:

For ticket sales: \$2.1 million. Media rights: \$120,000. NCAA distributions: \$107,000. Big Ten distributions: \$33,000. Program, novelty, parking and concessions: \$565,000. Royalties, licensing, advertisement and sponsorships: \$701,000. Endowment and investments: \$14,000. Other: \$152,000.

That results in a total of \$3,812,808 for total operating revenue.

Compared to the other pro-

grams at public Power Six schools, that ranks No. 3 behind Illinois women's basketball (\$4.9 million) and South Carolina women's basketball (\$4.1 million) for the 2022 fiscal year.

There is an asterisk with Illinois women's basketball, too. Of the Illini's \$4.9 million in revenue, \$4.17 million of that came from donations to the program. Without that donation, the Illini would have generated just \$775,910 in revenue.

Rounding out the top five: Texas A&M women's soccer (\$3.7 million) and UConn women's basketball (\$3.5 million). The No. 2 volleyball program based on total revenue is Texas, which brought in \$2.4 million in revenue that year.

In total, 68 women's programs brought in more than \$1 million in revenue. Of those 68, seven of them were volleyball programs — Nebraska, Texas, Wisconsin, Washington, Minnesota, Penn State and Virginia.

But netting a profit requires more than just a high revenue stream. Expenses need to be kept in check, too.

Nebraska's largest expense is compensation. In 2022, Nebraska reported spending \$1.1 million on coaching salaries and \$237,000 on support staff compensation. The No. 2 expense is team travel, which costs \$725,000.

Nebraska spends significantly more than most volleyball teams for travel because the Huskers charter for every match. Michigan State volleyball, for example, spent \$347,000 on team travel for volleyball that season.

Other expenses include athletic student aid (\$607,000), recruiting (\$49,000), guarantees (\$48,000), equipment (\$94,000), game expenses (\$267,000), overhead (\$90,000), meals (\$128,000), membership dues (\$3,000), marketing (\$554) and what's designated as "other" (\$203,000).

If you take Nebraska's revenue and subtract the expenses, there's the \$233,454 number.

Only Husker volleyball

Think of some of the biggest brands in women's athletics.

UConn basketball. LSU basketball. South Carolina basketball. Oklahoma softball.

The presumption is that those programs rake in the cash. And they do. All five of those programs brought in at least \$1.7 million in revenue in 2021-22.

But their expenses are what put them millions of dollars in the red.

South Carolina spends more

money than any other women's program — totaling \$9.5 million in expenses that year. UConn isn't far behind, spending \$8.9 million in 2021-22. Same thing for LSU basketball with \$8.3 million in expenses.

Those four programs are all in the top seven of spending.

Oklahoma spends more than any other softball team, ranking No. 30 among all programs in expenses, at \$4.9 million.

The commonality there is the high compensation those universities shell out to their coaching staffs.

LSU coach Kim Mulkey commands a \$3.1 million salary and her assistant pool is nearly \$1 million. Pair that with LSU's support staff pool of slightly more than \$1 million and there's \$5.1 million of LSU's \$8.3 million in expenses. That's 61% of LSU's spending.

UConn's Geno Auriemma earned \$2.6 million in 2022 with a \$1.4 million salary pool for assistants. The Huskies' support staff is paid nearly \$1 million, too, which equates to \$5 million of UConn's \$8.9 million — or 56% of its spending.

South Carolina's Dawn Staley is paid \$1.9 million with \$1.5 million in bonuses and her assistant pool is \$1.1 million. South Carolina's support staff is paid \$692,000. All of that combined totals \$4.3 million for 45% of the Gamecocks' expenses.

Oklahoma's Patty Gasso is paid \$1.5 million with an assistant pool of \$643,000 and a support staff pool of \$229,000.

Those salaries combine for \$2.3 million, which is 47% of Oklahoma's spending.

Nebraska volleyball, on the other hand, doesn't have as inflated salaries. Cook, for 2021-22, made \$789,000 with \$332,000 in assistant salaries and \$237,000 in support staff pay. That's roughly \$1.2 million or 34% of the Huskers' volleyball expenses.

The data for Nebraska volleyball for the 2023 fiscal year — July 2022 to June 2023 — should be relatively similar to the data outlined here.

But fiscal year 2024 — July 2023 to June 2024 — is going to be an anomaly of epic proportions.

Nebraska volleyball routinely leads the NCAA in attendance. Last season, there were 155,618 people who flocked to Devaney for NU's 19 home matches.

Imagine what the attendance numbers and the resulting revenue stream will look like with Volleyball Day in Nebraska taken into account.

When Nebraska originally pitched the idea, those in charge thought the match in Memorial Stadium might attract 40,000.

Double it. And then some.

With 90,000 tickets distributed, Nebraska is looking to make history — not only for the highest-attended women's event within the NCAA but for the largest attendance at a women's sporting event period.

The record to beat: 91,648. That's how many fans poured into Camp Nou Stadium in Barcelona for FC Barcelona's UEFA Champions League semifinal match against VfL Wolfsburg in April 2022.

The stateside record is held by the Rose Bowl when it hosted the 1999 Women's World Cup final between the United States and China. The recorded attendance for that pivotal moment in American sports history was 90,185.

"There's a lot of positives for how we're doing things," Cook said. "Whoever thought we'd get 90,000 in Memorial Stadium? I don't even know how you put that into words."

"We have the best fans in the country."

NU volleyball

From CI

on a court built on top of the football field at Memorial Stadium.

The attendance for this volleyball match will be greater than the 72,423 spectators for the men's basketball national championship game at NRG Stadium in Houston last season.

Nebraska will top that — for a regular-season match against an unranked team on a hot day in August.

Some people may go to the basketball championship game at a football stadium to be a part of something memorable, even if they have to watch some of the game on the big screen.

On Wednesday, the view of the court should be OK from most of

the seats — allowing fans to feel like they actually saw Lexi Rodriguez's diving dig.

It will be one of the largest crowds ever for a women's sporting event.

The American attendance record for a women's sporting event is 90,185 for the 1999 Women's World Cup final between the U.S. and China at the Rose Bowl. That was at the end of a long tournament in the most populated state in the country for the most popular sport in the world.

This is college volleyball in the Midwest.

The world record attendance for a women's sporting event is 91,648, also for a soccer match, in Spain.

For sure, it would be the largest crowd for a women's volleyball match, topping the 18,755 when

Nebraska played Wisconsin in the 2021 national championship match in Columbus, Ohio.

In order to count as an official

NCAA volleyball record, the at-

endance must be counted at the

conclusion of the second set of the

Huskies' match.

Still, it remains to be seen how many of the people who pur-

chased up to 10 tickets use them all, and how many of the seats on the secondary ticket markets go unclaimed.

The attendance might be able to

reach 92,000.

What a moment it will be for

women's sports — and the play-

ers. Even when Nebraska plays in front of 8,000 spectators at Dev-

aney Center, you wonder what

it must be like for the players' fam-

ilies, who remember some high

school matches with maybe 400

people there.

For this match, they'll be sit-

BASEBALL**International League**
Second half (x-first half winner)

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Worcester (Boston)	31	20	.608	—
Durham (Tampa Bay)	30	21	.588	1
Lehigh Valley (Phila.)	30	22	.577	1½
Scranton/WB (NY)	29	22	.569	2
St. Paul (Minneapolis)	29	22	.569	2
Nashville (Milwaukee)	28	22	.560	2½
Buffalo (Toronto)	28	22	.560	2½
Jacksonville (Miami)	29	23	.558	2½
x-Baltimore (Baltimore)	29	23	.558	2½
Iowa (Chicago Cubs)	27	24	.529	4
Toledo (Detroit)	27	25	.519	4½
Indianapolis (Pitt.)	26	25	.510	5
Gwinnett (Atlanta)	24	25	.490	6
Louisville (Cincinnati)	25	27	.481	6½
Columbus (Cleveland)	23	26	.469	7
Memphis (St. Louis)	23	28	.451	8
Rochester (Wash.)	23	28	.451	8
Syracuse (N.Y. Mets)	19	31	.380	11½
Omaha (Kansas City)	18	32	.360	12½
Charlotte (CWS)	11	41	.212	20½

Tuesday

Omaha 4, Louisville 3

Toledo 11, Iowa 6

Nashville at Durham, late

Rochester 2, Scranton/WB 1

Norfolk 8, Worcester 6

Lehigh Valley 9, Syracuse 8

Buffalo 2, Indianapolis 0

Jacksonville 2, Charlotte 1, 6 innings

Gwinnett at Memphis, late

Columbus at St. Paul, late

Wednesday

Louisville at Omaha, 6:35 p.m.

Iowa at Toledo

Nashville at Durham

Scranton/WB at Rochester

Norfolk at Worcester

Syracuse at Lehigh Valley

Indianapolis at Buffalo

Charlotte at Jacksonville

Gwinnett at Memphis

Columbus at St. Paul

American Association**Tuesday**

Lincoln 5, Cleburne 1

Sioux City at Kansas City, late

Gary SouthShore 4, Chicago 1

Kane County at Milwaukee, late

Winnipeg at Sioux Falls, late

Lake Country at Fargo-Moorhead, late

Wednesday

Sioux City at Kansas City

Gary SouthShore at Chicago

Kane County at Milwaukee

Winnipeg at Sioux Falls

Lake Country at Fargo-Moorhead

BASKETBALL**WNBA****EASTERN CONFERENCE**

	W	L	Pct.	GB
x-New York	28	7	.800	—
x-Connecticut	24	11	.686	4
Washington	17	18	.486	11
Atlanta	17	19	.472	11½
Chicago	14	21	.400	14
Indiana	11	24	.314	17

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	Pct.	GB
x-Las Vegas	30	6	.833	—
Dallas	19	16	.543	10½
Minnesota	17	19	.472	13
Los Angeles	15	19	.441	14
Seattle	10	25	.286	19½
Phoenix	9	26	.257	20½

Tuesday

Washington 83, Minnesota 72

Atlanta 94, Phoenix 76

Chicago at Los Angeles, late

Thursday

Phoenix at Connecticut, 6 p.m.

Seattle at Los Angeles, 9 p.m.

Washington at Las Vegas, 9 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 11

Buffalo at N.Y. Jets, 7:15 p.m.

CFL**Saturday**

British Columbia at Montreal

Division I Schedule**Thursday****AP TOP 25**

No. 14 Utah vs. Florida, 7 p.m.

OTHERS

N. Greenville at Charleston Southern, 5 p.m.

E. Illinois at Indiana St., 5 p.m.

W. Virginia St. at Morehead St., 5 p.m.

Delaware at Stony Brook, 6 p.m.

Elon at Wake Forest, 6 p.m.

Wednesday

Central Valley at Richmond

Friday

Greenville at Lexington

Knoxville at South Georgia

FOOTBALL**NFL****Thursday, Sept. 7**

Detroit at Kansas City, 7:20 p.m.

Sunday, Sept. 10

Carolina at Atlanta, noon

Houston at Baltimore, noon

Cincinnati at Cleveland, noon

Jacksonville at Indianapolis, noon

Tampa Bay at Minnesota, noon

New Orleans at San Francisco, noon

Philadelphia at Pittsburgh, noon

Green Bay at Washington, noon

Las Vegas at Chicago, 3:25 p.m.

Miami at L.A. Chargers, 3:25 p.m.

Philadelphia at New England, 3:25 p.m.

L.A. Rams at Seattle, 3:25 p.m.

Dallas at N.Y. Giants, 7:20 p.m.

Monday, Sept. 11

Buffalo at N.Y. Jets, 7:15 p.m.

CFL**Saturday**

British Columbia at Montreal

Division II

From C1

who previously played at Northwest Missouri State, UNK's league rival. Ferguson was a third-team All-American last season.

“She’s an experienced attacker with a lot of versatility. She can do a lot of things,” UNK coach Rick Squiers said. “She’s made really a seamless transition. Outstanding teammate. She’s a real veteran who has been through the league a few times. It almost feels like she’s been here longer because we knew her and she knows us.”

Walker and Ferguson are two key players for teams expected to be among the nation’s best once again at the Division II level.

Volleyball Day in Nebraska is about celebrating the state’s excellence in the sport, and Squiers at UNK and Scott Kneifl at Wayne have made their programs some of the state’s most consistent powerhouses. And the majority of both rosters are comprised of players who went to high school in Nebraska.

UNK starts the season ranked 16th nationally as it aims to make the NCAA D-II tournament for a 24th consecutive year. Squiers has compiled a 729-102 career record with the Lopers.

Wayne has made 12 D-II tournament appearances in 17 seasons under Kneifl. The Wildcats were ranked No. 1

SPORTS**ON THE AIR****BASEBALL****International League**
Second half (x-first half winner)

	W	L	Pct.	GB
Worcester (Boston)	31	20	.608	—
Durham (Tampa Bay)	30	21	.588	1
Lehigh Valley (Phila.)	30	22	.577	1½
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Indianapolis (Pitt.)	26	25	.510	5
Gwinnett (Atlanta)	24	25	.490	6
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